1: DeLand O-4 (No date)1908 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

another glass of whiskey and at night Captain Clarke and part of the men returned from the village, the rest remained all night.

"Wednesday, 2nd. This day I discovered how the Indians keep their horses during the winter. In the day time they are permitted to run out and gather what they can, and at night are brought into the lodges, with the natives themselves, and fed upon cottonwood branches, and in this way are kept in tolerable ease. (p. 66.)

"Sunday, 20th. I went up with one of the men to the villages. They treated us friendly and gave us victuals. After we were done eating they presented a bowlful to a buffalo head, saying "**eat that.**" Their superstitious credulity is so great that they believe by using the head well the living buffalo will come and that they will get a supply of meat. (p. 68)

Sioux Hostilities. "Thursday, 28th. Sixteen of us went up the river about six miles, where we found and cut down trees for four canoes. While we were absent an express arrived from the Rickarees village with news that the Sioux had declared war against us, and also the Mandans and Gros Ventres. They had boasted of the robbery of the 14th, at the Rickarees village in their way home, and that they intended to massacre the whole of us in the spring. By this express we therefore found out that it was the Sioux who had taken the horses from our men. (p. 70)

"Saturday, 6th. The day was clear and pleasant. This day we heard that some of the Rickarees had come up to the Mandan villages. Our interpreter and some of the men were sent over to ascertain the truth of the report and we were detained all day waiting their return. (p. 72)

Ricara Delegation. "Sunday, 7th. The men returned and four of the Rickarees with them. The commanding officers held a conversation with these Indians and they concluded that some of them would go down in the boat from their village to St. Louis. About five o'clock in the afternoon we left Fort Mandan in good spirits. Thirty-one men and a woman went up the river and thirteen returned down it in the boat. We had two perioques and six canoes and proceeded about four miles and encamped opposite the first Mandan village on the north side.

Departure From Mandan Villages. "Monday, 8th. At 12 the word was passed from a canoe in the rear that it was sinking,

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

554 785 received goods in abundance from people of the village, particularly persons of his children's clan.

554 785 789 Since the Mandan lived in a territory of uncertain rainfall, the crops were frequently endangered by drought. There were formal rainmaking ceremonies, but these frequently failed to bring rain. A man would frequently announce that he was fasting on a certain day to bring the rains. If rains came before the fasting began, he received credit for them and was paid generously for his services. When the rains had not come on the day when fasting was to begin, he would go to some designated spot to fast, singing his holy songs while watching the sky for the approaching clouds, which he would endeavor to direct toward the gardens. Anyone could fast to bring rains to the gardens or buffaloes near the village, but in general these extra rites were performed by persons lacking formal tribal bundles and were people who felt that they had not received proper recognition for their successes in warfare, horse-stealing, or in finding the buffalo herds. They had little to lose; failing to bring buffaloes or rain, they were thought none the less of for their failure and were praised if they succeeded.

785 There was a certain amount of fasting when bad luck persisted. When on eagle-trapping expeditions, some men would catch eagles while others did not. One who had been especially lucky would volunteer the use of his pit to one who had failed to catch birds. If the latter's bad luck persisted, he would fast and even have thongs inserted through his skin for dragging buffalo skulls.

224 554 788 There was a certain degree of specialization of males in a Mandan village. Those who had acquired an aptitude of finding the buffalo herds were relied upon for their good judgment in supervising the summer buffalo-hunting expeditions. Even those who eventually attained the status of leader were expected to attain that position by degrees. He was first taken out as scout to assist in locating the herds and later as leader of the hunters when he was expected to perform simple rites immediately before the attack was made on the herd. He would pray to the buffaloes not to send the party bad luck, and, when the surround had been made, he would make an offering of sage and feathers from the speckled eagle to the buffaloes by tying

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

224 462 could go to the pile brought in by anyone if her husband was slow in returning with his meat. There was no moiety division of the animals as was employed with the corral. Everyone was expected to work curing the meat, men and women alike. Older men would haul poles for scaffolds and set them up. Some husbands would be out as scouts and could not butcher. Crows Heart had been on a number of summer hunts and said that he never made a special effort to help his lodge group. As soon as he unloaded his meat, it was taken by anyone who was ready to cure it. Scattercorn said that one did not ask permission to take a hunter's meat and that one was more likely to be criticized for not working hard enough than for appearing selfish. All my informants were in agreement that quarrels over division of the meat and hides were unknown.

224 The leader and the leader of the hunters were entitled to the tongues, but these were shared with others having the buffalo as a god, while some tongues were given to old people. The evenings were spent in dancing and singing.

785 789 224 796 There was a marked increase of fasting during the summer hunts. Many thought that they secured better visions when fasting away from the village. Others thought that it would be highly desirable to fast far from the village to get visions from supernatural beings that might not come to the villages to "adopt a son." The older men taught that the young buffaloes lived in certain buttes and that fasting while out on the summer buffalo range would increase the next year's calf crop. To perpetuate the buffalo supply, they made offerings of speckled eagle feathers and calicoes to these buttes and encouraged the young men to fast near them. The leader would receive many valuable presents from young men seeking visions at that time while praying for their success when the thongs were being inserted through the skin. Dragging heads of recently killed buffaloes through the camp was a customary practice. Crows Heart thought that most young men who had recently fasted in the Okipa ceremony and had not received visions would repeat their vision quest at that time. The hunt would be terminated in time to reach the village before the corn was in the milk stage. Usually a second performance of the Okipa was held a short time after returning.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

utilize other decorations, she was obliged to seek another woman entitled to make the particular decoration and buy the right of her.

There was a similar specialization for men. When a young man was found to have an especially good voice which was heard above the others in the songs of the society dances, he was encouraged to buy singer rights in dances of both a sacred and a secular character. Although they were obliged to make payments either to existing singers or to the owners of bundles, their rewards far exceeded the initial costs. Their training included information relative to the ceremonies that were being performed, and they received recognition comparable to that shown those who had directed a number of successful war expeditions. In council, their authority was as great as those who had directed war parties, summer buffalo hunts, or eagle-trapping expeditions.

Those who could tattoo or paint designs appreciated by the people of the village were highly regarded and received a considerable amount of goods for their services. There were usually at least two skilled painters in each village, and they were expected to belong to opposite moieties. A man of one moiety would go to a man of the other moiety to have a robe, shield, or clothing painted either according to his particular inclination or with specific designs of things dreamed of. Each warrior had one or more shields made of buffalo hide taken from around the neck, and these were used universally by the Mandan for protection against arrows and spears until guns became more universal. The designs were believed to offer supernatural protection, and their potency was considered to be enhanced when the design was painted by a man of the opposite moiety, since there would be a payment to the "father" who would pray for the "son's" success. These painters were held responsible for the proper painting of the characters represented in the Okipa and received much property for their services. If they were otherwise sensible men, they enjoyed the same status as those who had been successful in other pursuits.

The arrowmakers were highly regarded. Although all males usually made arrows, some were employed specially for arrow-making. These were the older men of the lodge who had passed

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

Chapter VIII

CATFISH-TRAPPING CEREMONY

THIS ceremony was associated with the eagle-trapping bundle, and both possessed a common mythological origin from Black Wolf. There was no direct reference to the fish trap in the Black Wolf myth, but in theory the sacred snare could catch anything. Crows Heart explained that even a buffalo corral was in reality a large snare, so a man owning a sacred snare was selected to stand on a high hill and by means of motions, as of snaring the buffaloes, pulled the animals by its magical powers into the corral.[1] War leaders took their sacred snares along when looking for enemies for supernatural aid in ensnaring and destroying their foes.

Purchase of catfish- and eagle-trapping rites could be made simultaneously, or the fish-trapping rights could be bought at a later date. Some men bought rights in only one of the ceremonies. A seller possessing rights in both ceremonies could sell each ceremony four times. Associated closely with these two ceremonies were the sweat lodge and the snare rites for doctoring and officiating at the buffalo and antelope pounds.

Although the Missouri River carries considerable sediment, catfish are very abundant. The presence of catfish bones in ancient Mandan and Hidatsa villages indicates that considerable use was made of these fish as food.

When a fish trap was in use, the black-bear hide was kept in the owner's lodge, laid out on calicoes on a four-post standard with its head pointing toward the fireplace. Food was offered to the bundle each day while the fish trap was being used.

Ben Benson remembered these Mandan who had catfish-trapping rights about 1880:

1. Black Tongue (Big Turtle). He was also custodian of the Okipa turtle drums, Hoita in the Okipa, owner of an Eagle-trapping bundle, and a singer in the Corn ceremonies.

1. Refer to my manuscript, "Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization," for an account of the ceremonies associated with the buffalo corral.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

quired much "power" to pursue successful war and hunting activities.

A Mandan would say, "I claim no power for myself. I have no power except what my sacred objects have promised me." Children were protected by the parents' bundles until they were old enough to fast.

A young man on his first war expedition usually carried a sacred object from his father's bundle. This practice was repeated until the potency of the son's sacred bundle was established.

Supernatural power was acquired by the purchase of tribal bundles, feasts to tribal bundles, ceremonial sexual license, self-torture, and by showing kindness to the old people. The Mandan also believed that some people were "adopted" by a supernatural being without the novice's knowledge, since some people possessing no important tribal or individual bundles were unusually successful.

Women participating in sexual ceremonialism during the buffalo-calling rites contributed to the husband's supernatural "powers." The writer interviewed a number of women who had "walked with the buffaloes," as the practice is called. All agreed that they sought a good home, a loyal husband who was successful in hunting and warfare, good health, and plenty of food and clothing. They believed that the sexual act was tantamount to intercourse with the buffaloes, who, when placated, sent the herds to the prairies near the villages and promised the warriors success in warfare. Ceremonial sexual intercourse strengthened the marital bonds. It was believed that the buffaloes did all that they promised in dreams. Dreams were easy to get from the buffaloes.

The concept of "power" as a substance was further demonstrated by the manner of handling sacred objects. During the buffalo-calling ceremonies, the men impersonating buffaloes held out their sacred bundles for the women to press to their naked breasts. A woman placed her arms on the "holy man," dragging her arms downward toward the hand holding the bundle as though drawing the sacred powers possessed from the body into the sacred bundle, which was then taken from the buffalo impersonator and held to her breast. By this act it was

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

believed that the supernatural powers were transferred to her own body. These supernatural powers were in turn transmitted to her husband in the daily activities of living and working together. Men receiving sacred objects either to own or to hold took them in the same manner but did not hold them to the breast.

The faith of the Mandan in their sacred objects was unshaken by two severe smallpox epidemics. They speak of these epidemics as unfortunate and explain the impotency of their rites to protect the tribe on the grounds that, when the original ceremonies were introduced into the tribe, the sacred beings made no promise of tribal immunity to the white man's diseases. They believe that the tribe would have been exterminated by their enemies subsequent to the last smallpox epidemic had the ceremonies been abandoned.

The Mandan sacred bundles fall into two general categories. They are (1) the hereditary tribal bundles and (2) the personal bundles. Of these two groups of bundles, the former played a more significant role in the total ceremonial life and in a large measure set the background for the supernatural experiences which instituted the personal bundles.

At this point it would be well to indicate some of the general characteristics of these bundles not indicated in the main body of the report. The Mandan place greatest values on those bundles and ceremonies which traditionally were instituted in very early times. Foremost of these are the Okipa, founded by Lone Man and Hoita, and those Corn ceremonies which were founded by Good Furred Robe. Not only are these two ceremonies considered oldest, but they also involve the greatest number of participants.

The Okipa was without question the most complicated and colorful ceremony performed in the Northern Plains. According to tradition, the principal officers of the ceremony belonged to the WaxikEna clan. This clan was intrusted with the care and repair of the sacred cedar and other sacred objects appertaining to the ceremony. A male member of that clan occupied the sacred lodge and acted as announcer whenever tribal ceremonies were performed. A man selected one of his own clan to become his son-in-law to perpetuate the lineage in the sacred

3: Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

775 In this description of an after life, there was a marked mixture of ideas. The idea of multiple souls is Siouan, the rest is more or less common over most of the region.

776 821 As usual in the plains area every natural phenomenon and unaccountable event was mystery or medicine, and the medicine idea played the usual important part in all their religious customs. Thunder was ascribed to the familiar thunder-bird, the glitter of whose eyes dug a path through the clouds for the rain and caused the lightning.[1] Solitary claps of thunder were ascribed to a huge turtle which lived in the clouds. The rainbow was said to be a spirit which accompanies the sun and which shows itself when the sun retires for the night. The aurora borealis was said to be the fire kindled at an assembly of the great medicine men and warriors of the northern nations, over which they cooked their dead enemies in huge pots.[2] They had several beliefs about the stars—that of the Sioux, that each star is a man, and when a child is born the star comes down and when he dies it returns; also that a multitude of supernatural beings existed in the stars to which sacrifices and prayers were offered. Dreams were of very great importance and governed nearly all their acts. [787]

789 843 There were many small personal superstitions or mysteries. One man told Maximilian that he could turn a snowball into a white stone, another claimed that his nose always bled if he picked up his pipe by the bowl. There were many signs of good and bad luck. A pregnant woman was considered to bring luck at the game of Skohpe. The medicine men told them that if a clay image of an enemy were made with a needle or quill in it for a heart, and were placed at the foot of some medicine structure, that enemy would die. A pregnant woman brings bad luck to her husband in hunting. Many of the Mandans believed that they had some animal, as a buffalo, turtle or frog in them; the women had a dance when they thought an ear of corn was in them, which the dance caused to come out.[3] There were a number of other superstitions of this sort, mostly common to all the plains tribes. One more notable might be mentioned, however, that of building the fire with two sticks crossed in the center, 372

[1] Ibid., p. 422. [2] Ibid., p. 423. [3] Ibid., p. 463.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

wore robes with the hairy side out, wore painted women's robes. They formed a circle, the men began to sing, and the women danced, taking up the tune at the same time. They waddled like ducks from side to side, raising each foot alternately higher than the other, but not moving from their position. After a while there was an intermission, which was again followed by a dance. Only the older members had the tattoo marks between mouth and chin that were distinctive of the society. When Maximilian saw the society from Ruptare perform, there were three male musicians, who also wore white buffalo skin headdresses, and none of the women carried bundles of twigs. Otherwise the equipment was the same as in the other dance.[1]

An illustration of the dance of this society, reproduced from Maximilian's Atlas, is shown in Fig. 16.

Boller's account, which is of considerably later date, contributes the important fact that in case of a famine the White Buffalo Cow women were expected to make buffalo herds come nearer to the village. A similar function is attributed by Catlin to *male* Buffalo dancers wearing masks of a type described in this paper in connection with the Bull society (p. 315). Catlin, however, does not connect his Buffalo dance with any organization, for though only about ten or fifteen men are said to have joined in the dance at one time, he states that every Mandan was obliged to keep a buffalo mask for possible use in the buffalo-calling ceremony on the request of the chiefs.[2] Oddly enough, both Catlin and Boller say that their respective Buffalo dancers never failed to bring in the herds for the reason that they continued their performance for weeks if necessary, until buffalo were actually sighted. The dance of the society is thus described by Boller:

> The different members of the White-Cow band began to assemble, and soon the regular taps of the drum notified the camp that the great and important ceremony was in full progress. At one end of the lodge sat the musicians or drummers, three in number, who were untiring in their efforts, and aided their instrumentation by singing in a monotonous chanting strain. The women, comprising some forty or fifty matrons of the village, most of whose charms had unmistakably faded, were all attired in their quaintly garnished deer-skin dresses. Each had a spot of vermilion on either cheek, and their long black hair, which was carefully combed out and dressed with marrow grease, fell full and flowing over their shoulders, confined around the forehead with a fillet of white buffalo cow-skin. One of them had a white robe (which is very scarce, and held in the highest esteem) wrapped around her. This white robe was the common property of the band, and in its great power as a "medicine" were centred their hopes of bringing in the buffalo.[3]

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[1] Ibid., 283–284, 297.
[2] Catlin, I, 127–128.
[3] Boller, 218–219.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

Throughout the ceremony two women whose normal position in the circle was on the right side of the rear officer preserved order in the lodge; the distinctive badge of their office consisted of a skunkskin head band (Fig. 17).

The object of the ceremony was to lure the buffalo near the fireplace. Once, when the performance took place in a clearing in the woods, one buffalo came directly to the doorway, and was killed on the spot. During the same season a great abundance of buffalo were found in the timber. Apparently, anyone who was desirous of making the buffalo come could take the initiative and ask the society to undertake the performance.

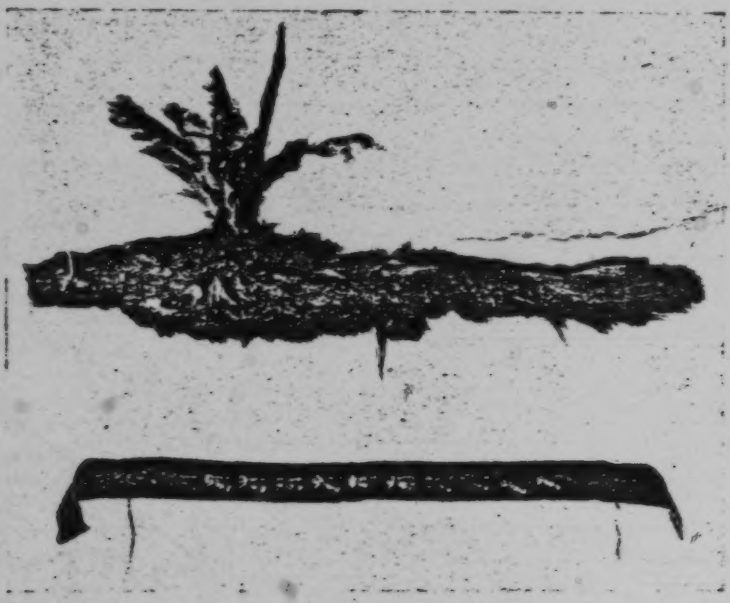

Fig. 17 (50.1–4815, 50.1–4731). Skunkskin Head Band of White Buffalo Cow Society and Head Band of Kit-Fox Society. Lengths, 79 cm. and 85 cm.

Any old member could adopt as many new ones as she wished, and was obliged to provide each tyro with a headdress. Calf-woman obtained one of these headdresses at the time of her adoption, though she was only two years of age. She became the middle officer because her adoptive mother gave her the appropriate calfskin robe. The musicians adopted new musicians who were obliged to pay heavily for the songs. Four of them had drums for instruments, while the remaining one used a rattle of buffalo skin.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
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Hidatsa NQ14

M H 575 789
Appropriately anyone interested in the success of the buffalo chase

give a feast to the society and make offerings. Buffalo-bird-woman remembered one instance when a white man made offerings to the buffalo spirits before a hunt. He gave the society a butcher knife and other property and thus addressed them: "You, Buffalo women, I give offerings to you. I will give you a butcher knife when you cross in the dance. I wish to save all these men from getting injured and I desire to get all the meat."

M H 575 292

The Museum owns several White Buffalo headdresses actually used by members and collected by Rev. Wilson and the present writer. One of these is represented in Fig. 18, together with the small notched wooden feather-straightener. In the skunkskin head band (Fig. 17) the feathers are attached in similar fashion.

6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

778 782 were fixed upon poles, representing, as we were told, the sun and moon, probably the lord of life and the old woman who never dies. Wormwood, of which they generally fasten a bunch to the poles, is a sacred medicine herb, to which they ascribe various effects.

787 782 789 304 Dreams, as I have before said, afford the usual motives for such actions, and for the penances which they impose upon themselves, and they believe all that appears in their dreams to be true. They were not yet acquainted with fire-arms, when one of the Indians dreamt of a weapon with which they could kill their enemies at a great distance, and soon afterwards the white men brought them the first gun. In the same manner they dreamt of horses before they obtained any. Even the Whites who live among them are infected with this belief in dreams, and other superstitions. They frequently promise, on undertaking anything, the joint of a finger, which they cut off at once, and keep in a handful of wormwood; this I myself saw among the Blackfeet, where, at that time, it was a sign of mourning. It is also done at the time of the Okippe in May and June. Almost all the Mandans and Manitaries have lost one or two joints of the fingers, and several of them more. There are numerous superstitious ideas and prejudices among these Indians. Thus, they believe that a person to whom they wish ill must die, if they make a figure of wood or clay, substituting for the heart, a needle, an awl, or a porcupine quill, and bury the image at the foot of one of their medicine poles. When a child is born, the father must not bridle a horse, that is to say, he is not to fasten the halter to the lower jaw, otherwise the child would die in convulsions. If the wife be pregnant, this circumstance is often the cause of much ill fortune to the husband, and he is frequently unsuccessful in hunting. If an Indian, in such cases, wounds a buffalo, without being able to kill it quickly, he endeavours to carry the heart of a buffalo home, and makes his wife discharge an arrow at it; he then again feels confidence in his weapons, that they will speedily kill. The Indians affirm that a pregnant woman is very lucky at a game called billiards. Many consider it a bad omen when a woman, while several Mandans are smoking together, passes between them. If a woman is lying on the ground between the men who are smoking, a piece of wood is laid across her, to serve as a communication between the men. The strongest man now living among the Mandans, who has been the victor in several wrestling matches with the Whites, always takes hold of his pipe by the head, for, were he to touch it in another part, the blood would suddenly rush from his nostrils. As soon as he bleeds in this manner, he instantly empties his pipe, and throws the contents into the fire, where it explodes like gunpowder, and the bleeding immediately stops. Nobody, they say, can touch this man's face, without at once bleeding at the nose and mouth. A certain Indian affirms that, whenever another offers him a pipe to smoke, out of civility, he immediately has his mouth full of worms, handfuls of which he throws into the fire. The medicine of another man consists in making a snow-ball, which he rolls a long time between his hands, so that it at length becomes hard, and is converted into a white stone, which, when

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6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

struck, emits fire. Many persons, even Whites, pretended they had seen this, and it is utterly useless to attempt convincing them to the contrary. The same man pretends that, during a dance, he plucked white feathers from a certain small bird, which he rolled between his hands, and formed of them, in a short time, a similar white stone. Sometimes an Indian takes it into his head to make his gun medicine, or to consecrate it, which he does not dare afterwards to part with. With this view he generally makes a yearly feast in the spring. The crier (kettle-tender, or marmiton) must invite a certain number of guests, and receive an equal number of small sticks, which he delivers to them, as a sign of their being invited; nay, now, European playing cards are actually sent round for this purpose. The guests appear, lay their guns aside, and take their places, on which the drum and schischikué go round, and every guest sings, and plays the drum and rattle. While this music is going on, they eat the food which has been dressed, nor are they allowed to leave any of it. The host then takes his gun, cuts a piece of flesh, and with it rubs the barrel, and flings the meat into the fire; this is repeated thrice. He then takes up some of the water in which the meat was boiled, rubs the whole length of the barrel with it, pours the rest of the broth into the fire; and, lastly, takes fat, with which he rubs the whole of his gun, and then throws the remainder into the fire.

A great many Mandans and Manitaries believe that they have wild animals in their body; one, for instance, affirmed he had a buffalo calf, the kicking of which he often felt; others said they had tortoises, frogs, lizards, birds, and so forth. Among the Manitaries we saw medicine dances of the women, where one pretended that she had a head of maize in her body, which she cast out by dancing, and then ate, after it had been mixed with wormwood. Another discharged blood, but of this we shall speak in the sequel. Similar feats are seen among the Mandans also. They likewise relate a number of foolish stories of miraculous and supernatural events. Thus, a girl refused to marry, and had no intercourse with the other sex. One night, while she was asleep, a man lay down by her side, on which she awoke, and saw him go away in a white buffalo robe. As he returned on the two succeeding nights, she resolved to mark him, and stained her hand with red. He appeared, and she gave him a blow, with her hand, on his back, not being able to hold him. On the following day she examined all the robes in the whole village, but could not find the mark of her hand, till at length she discovered it on the back of a large white dog. Some months after, as the Indians are fully persuaded, she was delivered of seven young dogs. The people consider owls as medicine birds, and pretend to hold conversations with them, and to understand their attitudes and voices; often, indeed, they keep these animals alive in their huts, and look upon them as soothsayers. I shall, subsequently, have occasion to speak of the manner in which they catch all kinds of birds of prey, which feed on the flesh of dead animals, particularly eagles, which they sometimes preserve alive. They frequently look upon them as medicine.

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

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[facing p. 132]

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

great curiosity, even in the country of buffaloes, and will always command an almost incredible price, from its extreme scarcity; and then, from its being the most costly article of traffic in these regions, it is usually converted into a *sacrifice*, being offered to the Great Spirit, as the most acceptable gift that can be procured. Amongst the vast herds of buffaloes which graze on these boundless prairies, there is not one in an hundred thousand, perhaps, that is white; and when such an one is obtained, it is considered great *medicine* or mystery.

On the receipt of the intelligence above-mentioned, the chiefs convened, in council, and deliberated on the expediency of procuring the white robe from the Blackfeet; and also of appropriating the requisite means, and devising the proper mode of procedure for effecting the purchase. At the close of their deliberations, eight men were fitted out on eight of their best horses, who took from the Fur Company's store, on the credit of the chiefs, goods exceeding even the value of their eight horses; and they started for the Mouth of the Yellow Stone, where they arrived in due time, and made the purchase, by leaving the eight horses and all the goods which they carried; returning on foot to their own village, bringing home with them the white robe, which was looked upon by all eyes of the villagers as a thing that was vastly curious, and containing (as they express it) something of the Great Spirit. This wonderful anomaly laid several days in the chief's lodge, until public curiosity was gratified; and then it was taken by the doctors or high-priests, and with a great deal of form and mystery consecrated, and raised on the top of a long pole over the *medicine-lodge*; where it now stands in a group with the others, and will stand as an offering to the Great Spirit, until it decays and falls to the ground.

This Letter, as I promised in its commencement, being devoted to some of the customs peculiar to the Mandans, and all of which will be new to the world, I shall close, after recording in it an account of a laughable farce, which was enacted in this village when I was on my journey up the river, and had stopped on the way to spend a day or two in the Mandan village.

Readers, did you ever hear of "*Rain Makers?*" If not, sit still, and read on; but laugh not—keep cool and sober, or else you may laugh in the *beginning*, and cry at the *end* of my story. Well, I introduce to you a new character—not a *doctor* or a *high-priest*, yet a *medicine-man*, and one of the highest and most respectable order, a "*Rain Maker!*" Such dignitaries live in the Mandan nation, aye, and "*rain stoppers*" too; and even those also amongst their *conjurati*, who, like Joshua of old, have even essayed to stop the sun in his course; but from the inefficiency of their medicine or mystery have long since descended into insignificance.

Well, the story begins thus:—The Mandans, as I have said in a former Letter, raise a great deal of corn; and sometimes a most disastrous drought will be visited on the land, destructive to their promised harvest. Such

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
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was the case when I arrived at the Mandan village on the steam-boat, Yellow-Stone. Rain had not fallen for many a day, and the dear little girls and the ugly old squaws, altogether (all of whom had fields of corn), were groaning and crying to their lords, and imploring them to intercede for rain, that their little respective patches, which were now turning pale and yellow, might not be withered, and they be deprived of the pleasure of their customary annual festivity, and the joyful occasion of the "roasting ears," and the "green corn dance."

The chiefs and doctors sympathized with the plaints of the women, and recommended patience. Great deliberation, they said, was necessary in these cases; and though they resolved on making the attempt to produce rain for the benefit of the corn; yet they very wisely resolved that to begin too soon might ensure their entire defeat in the endeavour; and that the longer they put it off, the more certain they would feel of ultimate success. So, after a few days of further delay, when the importunities of the women had become clamorous, and even mournful, and almost insupportable, the *medicine-men* assembled in the council-house, with all their mystery apparatus about them—with an abundance of wild sage, and other aromatic herbs, with a fire prepared to burn them, that their savoury odours might be sent forth to the Great Spirit. The lodge was closed to all the villagers, except some ten or fifteen young men, who were willing to hazard the dreadful alternative of making it rain, or suffer the everlasting disgrace of having made a fruitless essay.

They, only, were allowed as witnesses to the *hocus pocus* and *conjuration* devised by the doctors inside of the medicine-lodge; and they were called up by lot, each one in his turn, to spend a day upon the top of the lodge, to test the potency of his medicine; or, in other words, to see how far his voice might be heard and obeyed amongst the clouds of the heavens; whilst the doctors were burning incense in the wigwam below, and with their songs and prayers to the Great Spirit for success, were sending forth grateful fumes and odours to Him "who lives in the sun and commands the thunders of Heaven." Wah-kee (the shield) was the first who ascended the wigwam at sunrise; and he stood all day, and looked foolish, as he was counting over and over his string of mystery-beads—the whole village were assembled around him, and praying for his success. Not a cloud appeared—the day was calm and hot; and at the setting of the sun, he descended from the lodge and went home—"his *medicine* was not good," nor can he ever be a *medicine-man*.

Om-pah (the elk) was the next; he ascended the lodge at sunrise the next morning. His body was entirely naked, being covered with yellow clay. On his left arm he carried a beautiful shield, and a long lance in his right; and on his head the skin of a raven, the bird that soars amidst the clouds, and above the lightning's glare—he flourished his shield and brandished his lance, and raised his voice, but in vain; for at sunset the ground

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789 was dry and the sky was clear; the squaws were crying, and their corn was withering at its roots.

War-rah-pa (the beaver) was the next; he also spent his breath in vain upon the empty air, and came down at night—and Wak-a-dah-ha-hee (the white buffalo's hair) took the stand the next morning. He is a small, but beautifully proportioned young man. He was dressed in a tunic and leggings of the skins of the mountain-sheep, splendidly garnished with quills of the porcupine, and fringed with locks of hair taken by his own hand from the heads of his enemies. On his arm he carried his shield, made of the buffalo's hide—its boss was the head of the war-eagle—and its front was ornamented with "red chains of lightning." In his left hand he clenched his sinewy bow and one single arrow. The villagers were all gathered about him; when he threw up a feather to decide on the course of the wind, and he commenced thus:—"My friends! people of the pheasants! you see me here a sacrifice—I shall this day relieve you from great distress, and bring joy amongst you; or I shall descend from this lodge when the sun goes down, and live amongs the dogs and old women all my days. My friends! you saw which way the feather flew, and I hold my shield this day in the direction where the wind comes—the lightning on my shield will draw a great cloud, and this arrow, which is selected from my quiver, and which is feathered with the quill of the white swan, will make a hole in it. My friends! this hole in the lodge at my feet, shows me the medicine-men, who are seated in the lodge below me and crying to the Great Spirit; and through it comes and passes into my nose delightful odours, which you see rising in the smoke to the Great Spirit above, who rides in the clouds and commands the winds! Three days they have sat here, my friends, and nothing has been done to relieve your distress. On the first day was Wah-kee (the shield), he could do nothing; he counted his beads and came down—his medicine was not good—his name was bad, and it kept off the rain. The next was Om-pah (the elk); on his head the raven was seen, who flies *above* the storm, and he failed. War-rah-pa (the beaver) was the next, my friends; the beaver lives *under* the *water*, and he never wants it to rain. My friends! I see you are in great distress, and nothing has yet been done; this shield belonged to my father the White Buffalo; and the lightning you see on it is red; it was taken from a black cloud, and that cloud will come over us to-day. I am the white buffalo's hair—and I am the son of my father."

[776] In this manner flourished and manœuvred Wak-a-dah-ha-hee (the white buffalo's hair), alternately addressing the audience and the heavens—and holding converse with the winds and the "*je-bi*" (spirits) that are floating about in them—stamping his foot over the heads of the *magi*, who were involved in mysteries beneath him, and invoking the spirits of darkness and light to send rain, to gladden the hearts of the Mandans.

It happened on this memorable day about noon, that the steam-boat

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Yellow Stone, on her first trip up the Missouri River, approached and landed at the Mandan Village, as I have described in a former epistle. I was lucky enough to be a passenger on this boat, and helped to fire a salute of twenty guns of twelve pounds calibre, when we first came in sight of the village, some three or four miles below. These guns introduced a *new sound* into this strange country, which the Mandans at first supposed to be thunder; and the young man upon the lodge, who turned it to good account, was gathering fame in rounds of applause, which were repeated and echoed through the whole village; all eyes were centred upon him —chiefs envied him—mothers' hearts were beating high whilst they were decorating and leading up their fair daughters to offer him in marriage, on his signal success. The medicine-men had left the lodge, and came out to bestow upon him the envied title of "*medicine-man*," or "*doctor*," which he had so deservedly won—wreaths were prepared to decorate his brows, and eagle's plumes and calumets were in readiness for him; his friends were all rejoiced—his enemies wore on their faces a silent gloom and hatred; and his old sweethearts, who had formerly cast him off, gazed intensely upon him, as they glowed with the burning fever of repentance.

During all this excitement, Wak-a-dah-ha-hee kept his position, assuming the most commanding and threatening attitudes; brandishing his shield in the direction of the thunder (PLATE 58), although there was not a cloud to be seen, until he (poor fellow), being elevated above the rest of the village, espied, to his inexpressible amazement, the steam-boat ploughing its way up the windings of the river below; puffing her steam from her pipes, and sending forth the thunder from a twelve-pounder on her deck! * * * The White Buffalo's Hair stood motionless and turned pale, he looked awhile, and turned to the chief and to the multitude, and addressed them with a trembling lip—"My friends, we will get no rain!—there are, you see, no clouds; but my medicine is great—I have brought a *thunder boat*! look and see it! the thunder you hear is out of her mouth, and the lightning which you see is on the waters!"

At this intelligence, the whole village flew to the tops of their wigwams, or to the bank of the river, from whence the steamer was in full view, and ploughing along, to their utter dismay and confusion.

In this promiscuous throng of chiefs, doctors, women, children and dogs, was mingled Wak-a-dah-ha-hee (the white buffalo's hair), having descended from his high place to mingle with the frightened throng.

Dismayed at the approach of so strange and unaccountable an object, the Mandans stood their ground but a few moments; when, by an order of the chiefs, all hands were ensconced within the piquets of their village, and all the warriors armed for desperate defence. A few moments brought the boat in front of the village, and all was still and quiet as death; not a Mandan was to be seen upon the banks. The steamer was moored, and three or four of the chiefs soon after, walked boldly down the bank and on to her

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789 deck, with a spear in one hand and the calumet or pipe of peace in the other. The moment they stepped on board they met (to their great surprise and joy) their old friend, Major Sanford, their agent, which circumstance put an instant end to all their fears. The villagers were soon apprized of the fact, and the whole race of the beautiful and friendly Mandans was paraded on the bank of the river, in front of the steamer.

The "rain maker," whose apprehensions of a public calamity brought upon the nation by his extraordinary *medicine*, had, for the better security of his person from apprehended vengeance, secreted himself in some secure place, and was the last to come forward, and the last to be convinced that this visitation was a friendly one from the white people; and that his *medicine* had not in the least been instrumental in bringing it about. This information, though received by him with much caution and suspicion, at length gave him great relief, and quieted his mind as to his danger. Yet still in his breast there was a rankling thorn, though he escaped the dreaded vengeance which he had a few moments before apprehended as at hand; as he had the mortification and disgrace of having failed in his mysterious operations. He set up, however (during the day, in his conversation about the strange arrival), his *medicines*, as the cause of its approach; asserting everywhere and to everybody, that he knew of its coming, and that he had by his magic brought the occurrence about. This plea, however, did not get him much audience; and in fact, everything else was pretty much swallowed up in the guttural talk, and bustle, and gossip about the mysteries of the "thunder-boat;" and so passed the day, until just at the approach of evening, when the "White Buffalo's Hair" (more watchful of such matters on this occasion than most others) observed that a black cloud had been jutting up in the horizon, and was almost directly over the village! In an instant his shield was on his arm, and his bow in his hand, and he again upon the lodge! stiffened and braced to the last sinew, he stood, with his face and his shield presented to the cloud, and his bow drawn. He drew the eyes of the whole village upon him as he vaunted forth his super-human powers, and at the same time commanding the cloud to come nearer, that he might draw down its contents upon the heads and the corn-fields of the Mandans! In this wise he stood, waving his shield over his head, stamping his foot and frowning as he drew his bow and threatened the heavens, commanding it to rain—his bow was bent, and the arrow drawn to its head, was sent to the cloud, and he exclaimed, "My friends, it is done! Wak-a-dah-ha-hee's arrow has entered that black cloud, and the Mandans will be wet with the water of the skies!" His predictions were true;—in a few moments the cloud was over the village, and the rain fell in torrents. He stood for some time wielding his weapons and presenting his shield to the sky, while he boasted of his power and the efficacy of his *medicine*, to those who had been about him, but were now driven to the shelter of their wigwams. He, at length, finished his vaunts and his threats, and descended

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from his high place (in which he had been perfectly drenched), prepared to receive the honours and the homage that were due to one so potent in his mysteries; and to receive the style and title of "*medicine-man.*" This is one of a hundred different modes in which a man in Indian countries acquires the honourable appellation. 789

This man had "made it rain," and of course was to receive more than usual honours, as he had done much more than ordinary men could do. All eyes were upon him, and all were ready to admit that he was skilled in the magic art; and must be so nearly allied to the Great or Evil Spirit, that he must needs be a man of great and powerful influence in the nation, and well entitled to the style of doctor or *medicine-man.*

Readers, there are two facts relative to these strange transactions, which are infallibly true, and should needs be made known. The first is, that when the Mandans undertake to make it rain, *they never fail to succeed,* for their ceremonies never stop until rain begins to fall. The second is equally true, and is this:—that he who has once "*made it rain,*" never attempts it again; his medicine is undoubted—and on future occasions of the kind, he stands aloof, who has once done it in presence of the whole village giving an opportuuity to other young men who are ambitious to signalize themselves in the same way.

During the memorable night of which I have just spoken, the steam-boat remained by the side of the Mandan village, and the rain that had commenced falling continued to pour down its torrents until midnight; black thunder roared, and livid lightning flashed until the heavens appeared to be lit up with one unceasing and appalling glare. In this frightful moment of consternation, a flash of lightning buried itself in one of the earth-covered lodges of the Mandans, and killed a beautiful girl. Here was food and fuel fresh for their superstitions; and a night of vast tumult and excitement ensued. The dreams of the new-made medicine-man were troubled, and he had dreadful apprehensions for the coming day—for he knew that he was subject to the irrevocable decree of the chiefs and doctors, who canvass every strange and unaccountable event, with close and superstitious scrutiny, and let their vengeance fall without mercy upon its immediate cause.

He looked upon his well-earned fame as likely to be withheld from him; and also considered that his life might perhaps be demanded as the forfeit for this girl's death, which would certainly be charged upon him. He looked upon himself as culpable, and supposed the accident to have been occasioned by his criminal desertion of his post, when the steam-boat was approaching the village. Morning came, and he soon learned from some of his friends, the opinions of the wise men; and also the nature of the tribunal that was preparing for him; he sent to the prairie for his three horses, which were brought in, and he mounted the *medicine-lodge,* around which, in a few moments, the villagers were all assembled. "My friends! (said he) I see you all around me, and I am before you; my medicine, you see, is great—it is

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● 789 *too great*—I am young, and I was too fast—I knew not when to stop. The wigwam of Mah-sish is laid low, and many are the eyes that weep for Ko-ka (the antelope:) Wak-a-dah-ha-hee gives three horses to gladden the hearts of those who weep for Ko-ka; his medicine was great—his arrow pierced the black cloud, and the lightning came, and the *thunder-boat* also! who says the medicine of Wak-a-dah-ha-hee is not strong?"

At the end of this sentence an unanimous shout of approbation ran through the crowd, and the "Hair of the White Buffalo" descended amongst them, where he was greeted by shakes of the hand; and amongst whom he now lives and thrives under the familiar and honourable appellation of the "BIG DOUBLE MEDICINE."